

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held at County Hall, Lewes on 27 July 2018.

PRESENT Councillors Chris Dowling, Kathryn Field, Jim Sheppard, Colin Swansborough, Sylvia Tidy and Francis Whetstone

ALSO PRESENT Liz Rugg - Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care
Sally Carnie – Head of LAC Services
Janet Fairless – RHM – Homefield Cottage
Ian Williams – RHM Hazel Lodge
Scott Lipa – RHM Brodrick House
Helen Simmons - RHM Lansdowne Secure Unit
Charlotte De Retuerto – RHM The Bungalow
Shirin White – RHM Acorns, at Dorset Road
Dr Susan Leather – Designated Doctor for LAC
Nicky Scott – Operations Manager – Residential LAC Services
Adrian Sewell – Operations Manager – Fostering Team
Antony Julyan – Strategic Joint Commissioner ISEND
Beverly Moores – Strategic Lead – ISEND
Fiona Lewis – Operations Manager – Safeguarding Unit
Douglas Sinclair – Head of Children’s Safeguards & Quality Assurance
Carole Sykes- Operations Manager – Adoption and Permanence Team.

38 ELECTION OF CHAIR

38.1 Councillor Sylvia Tidy was appointed Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

39 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 APRIL 2018

39.1 RESOLVED to agree as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2018.

40 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

40.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Charles Clark.

41 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

41.1 There were none.

42 URGENT ITEMS

42.1 There were none.

43 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

43.1 The Panel agreed to exclude the press and public for the next two agenda items on the basis that if they were present there would be disclosure to them of information considered to be exempt by virtue of Category 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to any individual.

44 CHILDREN'S HOME REGULATIONS 2015, REGULATION 44: INSPECTION REPORTS FOR THE PERIOD MARCH 2018 - APRIL 2018

44.1 The Panel considered Regulation 44 Reports for the period March 2018 – April 2018 for the following Children's Homes:

- (a) Acorns at Dorset Road
- (b) Brodrick House
- (c) Hazel Lodge
- (d) Homefield Cottage
- (e) Lansdown Secure Unit
- (f) The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive

40.2 Each Registered Homes Manager (RHM) gave an oral update on activity at the home covering the period since the last Panel meeting.

40.3 The Panel discussed the challenges of emergency admissions. The Panel were advised that the use of agency staff may be required to assist with these situations which is clearly more expensive and potentially has an impact on the overall service

40.4 The Panel were advised that the renovation and décor improvement works taking place at the homes was having a positive impact on the young people and that many of them have had an input into these works.

40.5 The Panel praised the hard work of the staff and RHMs, with particular praise to the staff at Brodrick House which was rated outstanding by Ofsted at their June 2018 inspection.

40.6 RESOLVED to note the reports.

45 ANY OTHER EXEMPT ITEMS CONSIDERED URGENT BY THE CHAIR.

45.1 There were none.

46 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO) ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

46.1 The Panel considered the Independent Reviewing Officer Annual report for the period 2017/18.

46.2 The Panel discussed the high caseloads for IRO's and the implications this has on the service. The Panel were advised that caseloads were averaging at 102 children per IRO in March 2018, which is above the 60 recommended in the Department for Education's (DfE) IRO Handbook. In response to this, the Panel were advised that the ESCC Safeguarding Unit sets a target of a maximum caseload of 90 per IRO, and at the time of the meeting, the number of caseloads had dropped to between 90 and 92 children per IRO. Even with this high workload the team are meeting their statutory obligations to our LAC. In order to support this they are concentrating their input on children who are not in stable long term placements.

46.3 The Panel gave thanks to the IRO's and expressed their support for the important role they play.

46.4 RESOLVED to note the report.

47 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT OF THE EAST SUSSEX FOSTERING SERVICE

47.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which outlined the performance and progress of the East Sussex Fostering Service for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018. Adrian Sewell, Operations Manager Fostering Service, explained to the panel the successes and challenges in the areas of recruitment & retention; publicity campaigns; fostering panels, and foster carer training.

47.2 The Panel were informed that although the recruitment and retention of foster carers continues to be a challenge, in the year 2017/18 19 households offering 37 placements were approved. More children are placed with in house carers than ever before.

47.3 The Panel discussed the importance of the Fostering Panel and were informed that training on assessments, appointments of 6 new members, and the introduction of a new medical advisor have all contributed to the effectiveness of the Fostering Panel over the past year.

47.4 The Panel discussed the support systems in place for Foster Carers. They were advised that foster carers are now benefiting from a buddy system which has been successful in facilitating carers supporting each other with a range of issues. The Panel also discussed the POD system which has been introduced to allow Social Workers within a 'pod' to share knowledge and understanding of each fostering household's circumstances. This system has been successful and ensures consistency of support for carers should their allocated support worker be unavailable.

47.5 The Panel expressed their thanks to the East Sussex Fostering Service for the excellent work they do and the support they give to the children and young people in their care.

47.6 RESOLVED to note the report.

48 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT OF THE EAST SUSSEX ADOPTION AND PERMANENCE SERVICE.

47.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which outlined the performance and progress of the East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service for the period 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018. Carole Sykes, Operations Manager, Adoption and Permanence Service introduced the report and highlighted aspect of the work such as: recruitment of adopters, placements and matching, adoption support and panel activity.

47.2 The Panel discussed the challenges in recruitment of adopters over the past year and were informed that this is reflective of national trends and despite the reduction in recruitment, the service has continued to receive positive feedback with regards to the quality and customer focus of the recruitment process.

47.3 The Panel gave their thanks to the East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service with particular thanks to Dr Susan Leather for the medical advice and knowledge she has provided to the Adoption and Permanence panels.

RESOLVED the Panel noted the report.

49 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATISTICS

47.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on Looked After Children (LAC) statistics. It was noted that there has been an increase in the number of LAC which East Sussex currently has in its care. The Panel were advised that work has been undertaken to identify the reasons for this, with the results concluding that whilst the number of children entering the system over the past year has remained stable, young people are staying longer in placements. It is considered that this is due to the following factors: older children at risk of exploitation, both criminally and sexually; improved practice on neglect which has led to identifying larger family groups; and Courts being increasingly reluctant to approve adoption for some young children.

47.2 The Panel requested that an update regarding Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking young people is brought to the next meeting of the Panel on 26 October 2018.

RESOLVED the Panel noted the report

50 ANY OTHER NON-EXEMPT ITEMS CONSIDERED URGENT BY THE CHAIR.

50.1 There were none

The meeting ended at 12.22 pm.

